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SUBJECT: Goma Report September 28:  
FARDC Pounding Away at Rugari

¶1. (SBU) Summary: FARDC has done some withdrawing from the Rutshuru corridor, while pounding away at CNDP sites near Rugari and reinforcing its hold on Tongo. Meanwhile, CNDP has occupied much of the buffer zone at Ngungu, making commencement of the southern zone of separation doubtful. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) There was little movement of military forces in the eastern and northern zones September 28. Per the disengagement plan (according to which the eastern zone was to have been completed September 28), FARDC has done some withdrawing from the eastern (Rutshuru) zone of separation. But at the same time it continued a barrage against CNDP positions in the heights around Rugari and east of Rumangabo (following its preferred method of concentrating artillery around the MONUC base at Rugari, putting North Kivu brigade in danger).

¶3. (SBU) FARDC continued to reinforce its hold on Tongo, bringing in two companies directly across the single road from Rutshuru, after having lost the other positions taken in the northern zone in the past four days. CNDP made no significant response in either the eastern or northern area September 28. MONUC force commander General Gaye and FARDC army chief Kayembe visited Nyanzale, as well as Masisi and Rutshuru, by helicopter during the day. A North Kivu brigade convoy, making its way to Nyanzale, was stoned by the populace at Kibirizi, and a large anti-MONUC crowd also gathered in Kanyabayonga.

¶4. (SBU) A MONUC military team September 27-28 visited the Ngungu area, where the southern zone of separation was meant to get under way September 28. The team found that CNDP had full control of Ngungu and had extended its area of control well into the formerly agreed buffer zone, eight kilometers to the southwest at Gasake. The local CNDP commander was not aware of a disengagement plan and awaited orders from his command. It did not appear to the team that PARECO, which had occupied Ngungu for only four days, had an "organized force" in the area, but rather were opportunistic bandits and cattle rustlers. A separate humanitarian team helicoptered into Ngungu September 27 (septel). It concurred with the estimate of 18,000 IDPs clustered around the MONUC helicopter base. The IDPs appear to fear imminent fighting and to fear PARECO more than CNDP.

¶5. (SBU) According to Deputy Chief of Staff Col. Cunliffe, General Gaye pressed General Kayembe to speed up FARDC's withdrawal, seeking (with remarkable optimism) to have the withdrawal complete within 48 hours. Kayembe nodded approval. Gaye also pressed to get the ten anti-FDLR battalions back into Operation Kimia as soon as possible. Kayembe also, apparently, nodded approval.

¶6. (SBU) Meanwhile, CNDP commander in the eastern zone, Col. Makenga, has requested a meeting with North Kivu brigade September 29, at Bunagana. North Kivu brigade commander Brigadier General Rawat has requested the presence of the international facilitation on the road trip, hoping that discussion will cover more than the details of separation of forces in the eastern zone.

